

The President's Radio Address

August 26, 2000

Good morning. For millions of American children, this is the last glorious weekend of summer vacation. Ready or not, they're picking out new clothes and packing their school supplies for a promising new school year.

When that first bell rings on Monday, it signals not just the start of a new semester but also the highest enrollment in our Nation's history. This fall a record 53 million students will fill our classrooms. Unfortunately, thousands of school districts are struggling to find enough teachers to fill them.

Today I want to talk about this critical teacher shortage and the steps we're taking to address it. For nearly 8 years now, Vice President Gore and I have pushed to invest more in our schools and demand more from them. We've dramatically increased Federal investment in after-school and summer school. We've raised standards, strengthened accountability, and worked to turn around failing schools. Today, math, reading, and SAT scores all are up, and more students than ever are going on to college.

Because America needs good new teachers more than ever before, we've set out to hire 100,000 of the highest quality, and we're pushing hard toward that goal. Since 1998, we've helped local schools hire a third of that total, and this year we've asked Congress for funding to reach 50,000.

We've also provided housing discounts for teachers moving to distressed communities and the forgiveness of student loans for those who commit to stay. All across our Nation, school districts are looking for a new generation of dedicated teachers. In Cleveland, for example, administrators hired more than 200 teachers over the summer, but they're still looking for another 400. And Cleveland is not alone.

With a strong economy and such a tight labor market, it's hard to find so many qualified professionals, and the challenge is growing. Over the next decade, America will need to hire 2.2 million new teachers both to handle rising enrollment and to replace those teachers set to retire.

By working together as communities and a nation, we can meet the growing need for more teachers in our classrooms. Today I'm announc-

ing the first-ever national online teacher recruitment clearinghouse. By logging on to www.recruitingteachers.org, school districts can find qualified teachers, and teachers can find out where the jobs are.

I'm also directing Secretary Riley to notify every school district about this new tool and to provide them with information about how to make the most of it. This will transform what has been a hit-or-miss process into a more efficient, effective exchange of information. And over time, this site will help us to alleviate the national teacher shortage and to bring down class size.

Studies show what parents already know: Students perform better in smaller classes with more individual attention and greater discipline. In a few short weeks, Congress will return to Washington hot from the campaign trail, but America's families know this isn't just an election year; it's also a school year.

They want Congress to put progress before partisanship and to pass an education budget that reflects our national priorities. I urge Congress to pass my package of proposals to continue cutting class size and boosting teacher quality. These initiatives would provide \$2.75 billion to recruit, train, and hire teachers, to reduce the class size and to invest in teacher quality so we can make real progress toward our goal of having a qualified teacher in every classroom.

I also urge Congress to take prompt action on our proposal to help local school districts tackle the enormous challenge of modernizing old schools and building new ones. The average American public school was built 42 years ago, and decades of use have taken their toll. It is high time we get our children out of trailers and into 21st century classrooms.

At the start of this new school year, parents and teachers everywhere are telling students to do their best. In turn, their families have a right to expect that we, here, will do ours. So let's not make them wait another year for the resources they need.

With more teachers, smaller classes, modern schools, and faith in their future, our children

will do more than reach for their dreams; they'll achieve them.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:59 p.m. on August 25 in the Cabinet Room at the White

House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 26. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 25 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and an Exchange With Reporters in Abuja, Nigeria *August 26, 2000*

President Obasanjo. Mr. President, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, members of the press, let me say how pleased I am for this opportunity to welcome President Bill Clinton to Nigeria. I am confident that by now President Clinton must have felt from the personal meeting to the enthusiastic crowds that greeted him the extent of our delight to have him among us.

President Clinton and I have had very friendly and fruitful discussions covering all the items and subjects that make up the content of our joint declaration which we have just signed and exchanged, and even more. I just want to emphasize that for all the shared strategic interests between Nigeria and the United States of America, President Clinton and myself share a common view that is based on human welfare, human development, and human well-being in both our countries, our continents, and throughout the world.

Of course, whatever strategic interests, economic, political, or of a social nature, the essence is based on the fundamentals of humanity. Also deriving from this is the issue of Nigeria's role of peacemaking and peacekeeping in our sub-region, our region of Africa, and under the auspices of the U.N., the whole world. Needless to say that this goes for the United States, by virtue of her status as the number one world power today.

President Clinton has only just begun his visit, designed so far that it will be a memorable one, and we wish you a very pleasant day in Nigeria. We welcome you once again.

President Clinton. President Obasanjo, members of the Nigerian Government, members of the press, I think I can say on behalf of the Members of the United States Congress who

are here and the members of the American delegation, we are delighted to be in Nigeria.

Two years ago I came to Africa to begin building a new partnership between this continent and the United States, one in which Americans look upon Africa not simply as a continent with problems but also as a continent which presents the world's next great opportunity to advance the cause of peace, justice, and prosperity.

When I came here 2 years ago, one of the biggest obstacles to a new relationship with the entire continent was the fact that the democratic hopes of Nigeria's people were being smothered by military misrule and corruption, with your finest leaders being killed, banished, or in the case of President Obasanjo, forced to languish in prison.

My greatest hope then was that some day I could come to Africa again, to visit a Nigeria worthy of its people's dreams. Thanks to President Obasanjo and the people of Nigeria, I have the high honor today to visit the new Nigeria and to pledge America's support for the most important democratic transition in Africa since the fall of apartheid.

All of us in the American delegation know that after so many years of despair and plunder, your journey has not been easy. But we are also committed to working with the people of Nigeria to help build stronger institutions, improve education, fight disease, crime, and corruption, ease the burden of debt, and promote trade and investment in a way that brings more of the benefits of prosperity to people who have embraced democracy.

We are rebuilding ties severed during the years of dictatorship. I am very happy that last week the first direct flight since 1993 left